

The Role of Indigenous Language in Shaping Okun Identity Through Names

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Abstract

The profundity of the richness of the Okun indigenous names is essentially infinite. The names encompass all facets of our existence, and such values and beauty should not be permitted to fade into oblivion but rather be treasured and cultivated. This affluent cultural heritage and identity must be diligently safeguarded and transmitted throughout generations. This study examines the crucial role of indigenous language in forming Okun identity, emphasising the importance of names within the Okun ethnic group of Nigeria. The research utilises linguistic, sociological, and anthropological perspectives to analyse how Okun names, entrenched in indigenous language, function as indicators of identity, cultural continuity, and community affiliation. The study emphasises the intricate semantic dimensions inherent in Okun names, illustrating their links to historical accounts, spiritual convictions, and social principles. The research employs qualitative analysis of interviews, archival materials, and ethnographic observations to highlight the relationship between language and identity, demonstrating that the maintenance of indigenous naming practices cultivates cultural pride and resilience in the face of globalisation and linguistic uniformity. The results support the revitalisation of indigenous language as an essential method for preserving Okun heritage and reinforcing identity in a swiftly evolving environment. The study advocates for the integration of the Okun language into local educational curricula to guarantee that newer generations learn the language, its meanings, and cultural relevance, particularly the importance of names.

Keywords: Kogi State, Yoruba, Okun, Indigenous names,

Introduction

Language is a priceless gift from God to man for him to verbalize his thoughts, hopes and aspirations in life. Obadare (2020) asserts that language is an expression of personality because the way in which we speak or write, shows who we are. Language and man can never be dichotomized and it is one of the most outstanding characteristics that distinguish man from thinking animals. The Nigerian language situation is a complex one, with over 525 languages, and English language as the unifying factor. With language, man can express anything that has to do with him and his interaction with others; his love, life, betrayal, joy, sorrow, achievements, failure, anger, anguish, promotion, demotion, and all experiences in his terrestrial habitat, the list is endless. Language, whether spoken or written involves human and it is a major vehicle for communication that helps to cement social ties. Language and man are intertwined and without it, man's experience as far as his existence is concerned, will be a mirage. Also, God has so much blessed man with endless, elastic language repertoire that never runs dry, for him to express anything he wants. The roles of language in human existence cannot be overemphasized, hence Oyinloye & Ayodele (2020) opine that language is a set of symbols being used mainly for communication and which could be spoken or written.

Moreover, Ndeche (2018) submits that language is the pivot on which all human activities, ranging from the most prosaic, to the most profound revolve. In addition Ekhaton (2020) asserts that language is as important as our interest in it because our culture, society, economy, the future of the next generation in speaking reading and writing depends on it. Lamidi & Aboh (2011) opine that language constructs identity, and it helps to preserve identity.

Indigenous Language

This is the language of the parents of the child and which he is most comfortable to express himself and to learn. Obadare (2024) submits that the child dreams and thinks in his indigenous language. Also, Chumbow (1987) quoted in Wolff (2008) asserts that the language of a nation is its natural resources on the same level as its petroleum minerals and other natural resources and that these languages can therefore be harnessed and developed, if carefully planned for overall interest of the nation. In addition, Olatunji (2020) opines that most of the elites and educated people in the society prefer to communicate in the English language and they look down on other members of the society that cannot express themselves in the language, as illiterates and uncivilized. Using the indigenous language, improves the learner's linguistic development in no small way. Aturamu, Awoniyi & Kuta (2016) affirm that language is part of culture and indigenous language will express the culture of people better than a foreign language. When indigenous languages are promoted, their contribution to the economic and political growth cannot be overemphasized. The effective use of the language of the people for expression cannot be underestimated.

Names

A name is a means of identification, it is historical, cultural and definitely has a role to play in the destiny of the bearer. Igboin (2014) submits that African names are not philosophical rhetoric but they are believed to convey deep intrinsic significance for the bearer and the community as a whole. Yorubas place great value on names and in the context of the Yoruba people, naming has to do with the family, culture, tradition, religious belief, occupation and the experience surrounding the birth of the child. It is therefore important to preserve and cherish it. It is observed that youths of today are altering and distorting their names. Similarly, name is very significant and is believed to be an aspect of a person's identity and social status, which has roles to play in shaping the destiny of the child. Awoniyi (1978) opines that the naming ceremony is both spiritual as well as customarily educative. The child is initiated into his culture and his unforeseen future is particularly blessed. Moreover, the child is expected to honour his name and to avoid anything that will tarnish it. Awoniyi (1978) opines that the name given to the child has meaning. Nabal, a Biblical character, King James Bible, (2011) 1Samuel 25:2-44, was said to be rich but a fool because the name Nabal connotes foolishness. The names we bear capture every aspect of human existence: belief in the almightiness and creative nature of God, emphasis on wisdom, importance of children in African families, and belief in fate and destiny etc. Olaiya (2006) submits that every name given in Yoruba

set up is attributed to an event while Lawal (2004) opines that every name in Yoruba has meaning. Also, Rasool& Cutis (2009) affirm that names are like the spirits that reflect the character of the persons bearing them and that is why Ofodu & Olasehinde (2020) state that parents do a thorough job before naming their children. It is observed that names have a lot to do with the destiny of a child. Guma (2001), Lamidi&Aboh (2011) affirm that names reflect the circumstances of a child's birth and the parents' perception of the child. In Yoruba culture, a child is not just given a name for the sake of naming the child

There is a proverb that says (Ile laawo.ka to so omoloruko) that attention must be paid to family background before giving a name to any child. It is observed that many Yorubas are becoming ashamed of the names given to them at birth and as a result, some youths are westernizing, distorting and even altering their names completely. According to the Yoruba blog, (2022) it is a pity that Yoruba Youngers are not appreciating their indigenous names, as a result they are renaming themselves to names that they barely know the meaning.

Examples of indigenous names that are altered.

S/N	Indigenous Names	Altered Names
1	Aarinola	Harinola
2	Adebayo	Hadeybayor/Adeybayor
3	Adedayo	Hardeedayor
4	Adeola	Hardeola
5	Adeyemi	Hardeyyemmy
6	Akinola	Harkinolar
7	Ayomide	Ayomidey
8	Bayo	Bayor
9	Bosedede	Bosedey
10	Femi	Phemmy/ phemi
11	Kemi	Kemmy
12	Oladunni	Horladunni
13	Olamide	Horlamidey
14	Olayemi	Holaryemi
15	Oluwafemi	Horluwafemmy
16	Oluwasegun	Horluwasegun
17	Omowunmi	Hormowunmi
18	Opeyemi	Horpeyemmy
19	Remi	Remmy
20	Tobi	Tobee
21	Tolani	Tholani
22	Tomi	Tommy
23	Wale	Walex
24	Yomi	Yommy/ Yommex

Kogi State

It is a State created in 1991 from parts of Kwara State and Benue State with its capital in Lokoja. Kogi State is located in the North-central region of Nigeria bordered by Niger State to the North, Nassarawa State to the East, Benue State to the South East, and Enugu State to the South, Anambra State to the South West, and Ekiti State and Ondo State to the West. It is home to three major ethnic groups which are Okun, Igala and Igbira. It has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons; the rainy season and the dry season.

Okun

Okun is the name of the Yoruba speaking people of Kogi State, and it refers to both the people and the language which they speak. The Okun people occupy six (6) LGAs in Kogi State namely Kabba/Bunu,

Yagba East, Yagba West, Mopamuro, Ijumu and Lokoja LGAs. Okun people speak various Yoruba dialects such as Bunu, Owe, Yagba, Gbede, Adde, Kiri and Oworo and these are mutually intelligible to a great extent to any Yoruba speaker. The word Okun, according to Boaheng & Olupinyo (2022) refer to a vitality or strength usually used in the context of greeting people. It is the collective name used for referring to people who are culturally, historically and linguistically related. Recently, The Bible Society of Nigeria initiated a gigantic project of translating The Holy Bible into the Okun language, to make the word of God accessible to Okun people, irrespective of educational status. This herculean initiative was applauded by all Okuns and even non Okuns.

Okun names

In Kogi State, Okun names are derived from the okun language, which is spoken by the okun people of Kogi State in Nigeria. Okun names are not only for identification but loaded with meanings and one thing that is peculiar with Okun names is the uniqueness and cultural ties associated with them. Once an Okun name is mentioned anywhere across the globe, one can predict with one hundred percent accuracy that the bearer of such a name is from Okun in Kogi State. This unique identification is indigenously and proudly top notch!

The names are the reflections of the Okun language and culture. However, it is pertinent to know that Okun names reflect a strong cultural identity, convey a strong belief in God, connection with ancestral heritage and deities, reflection of cultural values and traditions. The list is endless.

In addition, Okun names have cultural, personal and spiritual significance, give social bonding and cultural understanding. The names also promote self-pride and language preservation. Okun names are uniquely Okun without cross ethnic borrowing. Ayinmode (2019) asserts that the richness of Okun names is almost inexhaustible.

It is imperative to know that in spite of the richness of Okun names, it is painful to observe some modern Okun parents are giving foreign names to their children and it is not strange to hear names such as Kainos, Liam, Logan, Mason, Harper, Taylor, Marlow, Cainos, Kimbly. etc

Benefits of Okun names

- Preservation of cultural heritage.
- Identity formation since it reflects values, traditions and history
- Okun names give unique identity
- It shows family legacy
- It evokes spiritual consciousness

In Okun, there are names that emphasize the people's belief in the almightiness and absoluteness of God, the irreplaceable role of mothers, the unquantifiable value of children, emphasis on good character, importance of family (Iwere), the ingenious nature of wisdom, the interdependent relationship between the physical and spiritual on mother earth, the inevitability and reality of destiny in human lives, the unwavering, authentic nature of truth, genuine plea to household enemies to allow them to be, the mysterious, cosmic, vengeful and sacred nature of deities, the inheritable and progenitorial nature of posterity, the rewarding nature of work, the opulent nature of money, the inexplicable, reality and painful nature of death, among others.

The concept of God

The okun people acknowledge the divine presence of God in their lives and connection to their faith. Nabofa (1980) opines that in each African society, the people have a local name for God and these various names of God clearly show His character and emphasize on the fact that He is a reality and that He is not an abstract concept or being. In the African context, God is real and this reality manifests in the different names given to Him. Nabofa (1980) asserts that there are names of God which convey the attributes of God and these names are tied up with the cultural and social environments of each society so that their full meanings can only be appreciated in that context. These names speak volumes about the activities of God, His creative ability, His omnipotent omnipresent and omniscient nature.

Among the Okuns, like every other African, God is very real. He is seen as the creator, the defender, the provider, the warrior. This belief also influences the names given to people. Nabofa (1980) submits that God's care for His creation is also experienced on a personal level. This is shown in names which describe Him as guardian, protector and friend. In Okun names, it is common to find the prefix Olo or Olu which means God or Lord before their names. This shows the strong belief they have in the almightiness of God.

Okun names reverring God	Meaning
Olorunmohunle	I rely wholly on God
Olorunshogo	God does glorious things
Olorunfemi	God loves me
Oloruntope	God is worthy of thanks
Oloruntomola	God is enough for my wealth
Olaoluwa	The wealth of God
Olorun/ Olountoyin	God is worthy of praise
Olorunsegun	God has won the battle
Oluwaseunghunmi/ Oluwaseun	God has done something for me
Olobatoke	The person who has access to the king is as formidable as a mountain
Olorunponmi	God puts me on His back
Oluwasemiye	God has counted me worthy
Olorun / Olounfunmilayo	God has given me joy
Olorunmolu	Only God know the favourite or who will become king
Olorunjughon	God is greater than them / God is greater than my enemies
Oloungbon / Olorungbon	God is wise
Olounmaiye	God knows the world
Olounmonu	God knows the inner mind
Olounnipa/ Olorunnipa	God is capable / He has ability
Olorunrighon	God sees them / He sees my enemies
Olorunpomi	God supports me

Mothers

In Okun, the importance of mothers is emphasized in the names glorifying motherhood, as mothers are held in high esteem in Okun culture. In Yoruba culture, mothers are even referred to as idols that should be worshipped and idolized. Akujobi (2011) submits that mother is good, strong, valuable, true, and central to a child's existence.

Okun names extolling mothers	Meaning
Iyedunke	It is pleasant to pamper mothers
Iyedunni	It is sweet to have a mother
Iyekemi	Mother pampers me
Iyeenede	Mother is immeasurable
Iyefemide	Mother visits me

Iyenijo	Mother has her day
Iyetunde	Mother has come back
Iyenola	Mother is honourable
Iyetomola	Mother is enough for me as wealth
Iyehunwa	Mother is good/ mother is beautiful
Ibiyedi	Mother occupies a critical space in my life
Iyeyomi	Mother has rescued me
Iyefemigha	Mother visits me

Children

In Okun culture, like any Yoruba culture, children are not given names for the sake of naming, names hold significant meaning based on experience surrounding the birth and belief that a name has a role to play in shaping or influencing the child's life. Okun language emphasizes the importance of the irreplaceable role of children in the names given to the child as reflected. Children are described as more precious than wealth, worthy to be pampered, are joy givers and are the future of their parents. The value of children can never be quantified Ajayi (2016) submits, that the child is the main constituent of any future generation.

Okun names	Meaning
Omohunwa	Children are beautiful
Esonikisomo	Children are not created by man
Omofemigha	Children have visited me
Omodolu	Children have become favourites
Omoboja	Children have returned from the market
Omodunke	It is sweet to pamper children
Omoejolangbe	Child does not allow wealth to be lost
Omoboniraso	A child covers one's nakedness more than clothes
Omofemide	Child came to me
Omogbemika	Child makes me visible
Omoejeadebi	Child cannot be borrowed to be born
Omobilejo	Child fits or beautifies the house
Omorewo	Child is better than money
Omonale	Child owns the evening of our lives
Omoniyi	Children have honour
Omotayinse	Children take care of the future when the parents are no more
Omoyeni	Child fits one
Omotulese	Child makes the house more beautiful
Omoesofe	Child is not free
Omosina	Child paves the way
Omotilegha	Child comes from the house
Omosini	A child supersedes everything / A child is first

Character

There is a saying in Okun that good character is man's adornment. From time immemorial, good character traits have always been celebrated and rewarded while negative character usually attracts punishment. Olawe (2022) submits that morals have to do with the values and norms of a given society. It encompasses the acceptable ways in which people in the society are expected to conform with. In Okun, there are indigenous names that promote morality and good character. Awoniyi (1978) asserts that the end-

product of education is to make an individual an omoluabi (a responsible individual). Also, Awoniyi (1978) submits that it is in character-building that Yoruba education is manifested in its entirety. Many factors go into character-building. In Yoruba education, honesty, morality, intelligence, knowledge, diplomacy, and respect for elders and so on are emphasized. According to Olawe (2022) Yoruba language is one of the indigenous languages that are richly embedded with high moral norms and values. Character is the good quality of a person that usually include moral or emotional strength, honesty and fairness. Also, Mekiliuwa (2018) submits that in traditional societies, positive character and moral values were developed and acquired through teaching, instruction, indoctrination, role modelling and other socialization processes.

Modern education also emphasise the importance of character. Hence Dewey (1963) submits that the function of the education is to develop the moral character of the child. It emphasizes that the function of education is not only to develop intellectualism but also to produce intellectuals who will be morally acceptable to the society.

There are names that emphasize good character

Okun Names	Meaning in Okun
Otitoju	Truth is the very best
Aderewo	Good character is more profitable than money
Otitoniaye	truth owns the world
Aderewa	Good character is more preferable than beauty
Ayinmiro	I am concerned about good posterity
Ayinmidu	I am concerned about posterity, when I eventually leave (die)
Ayindero	Good posterity is easy
Iwanaiye	Good character owns the world
Obaniwa	The king has good character
Akanmidu	I care about shame, (hence will not engage in shameful acts)
Meseru	I am not dubious
Iunghinmoyan	I have chosen good reputation
Makanjuola	Don't be in a hurry to get wealth / I am not in a hurry to get wealth
Woniseun	Be careful not to hurt another person
Otitomaiye	It is truth that rules the world

Family

The family is the first socializing institution. In Okun, families are regarded as supreme and there are names extolling this. In Okun, there are names that reflect the importance of family and community and these names also stress the immeasurable benefits of family, the oneness, the values, belongingness and love. Ajayi (2016) opines that family is the home of the nation and the root of national survival.

Okun names	Meanings
Olonigbon	The one who has family has wisdom
Ebiejemite/ Ibiejemite	Family has not allowed me to be put to shame
Ibihunwa	Family is beautiful
Kajotoni	Nothing is comparable to what belongs to one
Medupin	I don't fight what destiny has not bestowed on me
Olubiyo	The one with family has escaped
Elebiyo / Olubiyo	The one that has a family is happy
Oloniniji	He who has family has shelter
Ibinola	Family has honour
Ehighnotoni	Nothing can be compared to a family
Ibiniwa	Family has character
Olonikayo	He who has people rejoices

Ibitayo	Family is worthy of joy
Olonieeyi	He who has family does not stumble
Mononiri	I once had people
Ibirewo	Family is superior to money
Olonieesora	The one who has family is not careful
Ibitomi	Family is enough for me
Ibiteye	Family is worthy of honour
Ibionidi	Family has supported me
Oloniemakan	He who has family is not put to shame
Ibiyomi	Family rescues me
Befemihi	How they like me
Tonidunni	It is good when you have your own portion

Wisdom

The Okuns regard wisdom as great, hence bear names that extol this valuable, timeless and endless virtue. The Holy Bible King James Bible, (2011) Proverbs 4:7-9.refers to wisdom as the principal thing. The wisdom related names reveal their cultural values and philosophical insights.

Okun names	Meanings
Tolugbonse	The wise one prevails
Aiyedogbon	The world requires wisdom
Momorebe	I know better not to do evil
Momodebe	I am knowledgeable to do good
Oniegbontan	No human being is all wise
Ogbonnaiye	Wisdom owns the world
Olonigbon	The one who has a family is wise
Iunghonnimo	What I know
Ologbonyo	The wise is safe
Togbonro	Have a rethink of your wisdom/actions

Earth

In Africa, the earth believed to be the footrest of God is a sacred place, revered as a deity, symbolizing life, fertility and source of sustenance. In Yoruba cosmology, the word (Aye) is a multifaceted realm where the physical and spiritual coexist, intersect, interact influencing one another.

The earth is our terrestrial habitat, where we conduct all our affairs, where destinies are fulfilled or tampered with negatively. The earth and man are intricately interwoven. There are names in Okun that reveal the deep connection between earth and human beings. It reveals that all our activities on earth, whether good or bad, are not hidden from the one (Almighty) who sent us to the earth for divine assignment. Earth is our home planet. In addition, Lumanze (2021) submits that earth is an important asset that God gave, entrusted to mankind to care for it. It is alive and responsive to God, humanity and other creatures.

Okun names relating to the earth	Meaning
Larayetan	Who has understood the whole world(the world is beyond the comprehension of humans)
Aiyenigba	The world is seasonal
Aiyeenighon	The world is immeasurable
Aiyeeribe	The world is not like you view it
Aiyepeku	The world is not exhausted, it still remains
Aiyemogha	This world that I have come to

Aiyeejoriitan	It is improper or unwise to publicise all your achievements to the world/ public
Medayese	I don't do things alone in this world

In the Yoruba worldview, the earth (Aye) is a vibrant and interconnected domain that extends beyond its physical boundaries, holding profound spiritual significance. Aniekan (2016) on the impact of ecology in African traditional religion asserts that the indigenous people recognize and understand their place in the ecology system, bearing in mind that nature or the ecological system has spiritual dimension attached to it. By virtue of the fact that the Africans recognize that spirit inhabit nature, there is a tendency to nurture and take good care of it. The earth according to Africans interacts with the spiritual realm (Orun) and is inhabited by a diverse array of beings, including humans, deities and other entities. To Africans in general and Yorubas in particular, the earth is sacred, a living thing that is even used as a witness in a dispute.

Names relating to belief in earth as mother deity.

Aledare	The land has vindicated me
Ilegbemi/Alegbemi	The land / earth has supported me
Alenire	There is good in land or ownership or access to(good) land is worth pursuing
Alegbami	The land / earth has delivered me
Alemede	I have come to request for land
Alemika	The earth knows the wicked
Alemuregha	The land brings good things
Alemeru	The land knows the unjust / dubious
Aleyomi	The land has delivered me
Aleraiye	The land sees the world (the evil one)
Alemonu	The earth knows the intent of the heart
Alemejo	The earth knows how to judge impartially
Alegbejo	The earth has attended to my case
Ilesari	The earth is a witness
Ileyomi	The earth delivers me

Destiny

In Okun, just like the Yorubas, there is a strong belief in destiny as the designer of one's life. The Okuns believe that destiny, which is beyond the control of mortal man, is what shapes our lives. Dopamu (2014) states that Africans believe that whatsoever happens to man in life, has already been decided by God and is unalterable. Also, Yorubas believe that man chooses his destiny while coming into the world and he or she lives according to what he knelt down (akunleyan) to choose before coming.

Okun names	Meaning
Ipinmoroti	I rely wholly on my destiny
Medayese	I am not alone in the world
Medupin	I don't struggle with my destiny or my lot
Ighonniyan	What a person chooses as destiny
Ighonnimughaye	What a person brings to the world as his lot
Ipinmoyan	My chosen destiny
Ighinorishaghunmi	What the gods gave me as my portion or lot
Ighinmoyan	What I have chosen
Ipinghinmoyan	My lot that I have chosen
Boridamihi	Where my destiny / head has destined me to be

Truth

Truth is a desired concept in the African and Okun culture, which is shaped by norms and values. It is one of the desired qualities of a responsible Okun man to possess. Nnoruga (1999) affirms that in most African cultures, truth is a key value. It has moral, philosophical and social significance.

Okun names	Meaning
Otitoju	Truth is the best
Otitonaiye	It is truth that rules the world
Otitoloju	Truth is the most preferred
Otitoleke	Truth prevails
Otitobori	Truth prevails
Tighonsobo	Their own is nothing but lies

Plea

There are names that reflect the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Okun people and are often given to children born during times of prayer, or as a response to a specific plea or request. It is deeply rooted in the belief of Africans that there are house hold enemies who are all out to thwart the beautiful plans God has for His people. Appia–Korang (2022) opines that as far as you are a human being, you have enemies. The day you were born, was the day your enemy was born These Okun names therefore, are as a result of past ugly experiences, which are prayers to God and plea to perceived enemies to allow them be.

Okun names	Meaning
Ebayemito	If they allow me to live
Jemiseniyan	Allow me to be a human being (allow me to be successful)
Jemisoni	Allow me to be successful
Jemirin	Allow me to walk(have my God-ordained way)
Jemisaye	Allow me to live in this world
Jemiboin	Allow me to raise this child
Jemirighon	Allow me to see them
Jemisede	Let me do small in this world
Jemigbon	Allow me to be wise
Motojehi	I am due to be left un-afflicted
Obajemihi	If the enemy can just leave me alone
Obajemini	If enemies can just allow me to have
Jemisetemi	Allow me to do my own
Jemibeghon	Let me appeal to them to let me be
Esemikose	It is not my fault

Deities

Africans' belief in deities as messengers of God is very deep. The deities are seen as powerful and well respected because there is a strong belief that they have roles to play in the destiny of the adherents. Africans believe that deities can warn, protect, damage and influence lives either positively or negatively. In Okun, there are names showing links of some families to deities. Ushé (2017) opines that mankind from time immemorial, have been in the habit of looking at the forces of nature with awe and reverence. This made him to worship these forces as having one supernatural power or another.

Okun names	Meaning
Oshagbemi	gods have supported me
Iuninorisaghunni	What the gods give to people
Ighunnugbemi	Ighunnu(god) has supported me
Osadare	gods have vindicated me
Ighinorisaghunmi	What the gods give me
Osamoto	gods know the truth
Osarinu	gods see the mind
Orisanaiye	The gods own the world
Osanipin	The gods have their own portion
Osasona	The gods are in charge of arts
Fagbemi	Ifa defends me
Fabuda	I am about to complete the Ifa rites
Fadayin	Ifa defends posterity
Fakomogbon	Ifa has taught me wisdom
Ifamohunle	I rely on ifa

Posterity

To an African, living is spiritual and there is life after life, it is about leaving a legacy of eternal value and hence, Luswata (2023) submits that a legacy of eternal value is greater than temporal inheritance of the physical properties of earth. The belief in posterity is deeply rooted in the Okun culture, which helps to shape the behaviour of individuals in the community to behave well and to have a rethink each time they are tempted to act contrary to the ethics of the society. There is a strong belief that whatever you do today will speak for your generation after you. This serves as monitoring instrument for behaviour. The names act as reminders for cultural preservation, that tomorrow (future) (ayin) is just around the corner, so we should behave well.

Ayinmode	I solicit good posterity
Ayinmodu	I struggle to have a good posterity
Ayinmiro	I think of my posterity

Work

Africans are naturally hardworking People. They believe and preach it with common sayings like hardwork pays, hard .work does not kill, and it is laziness that kills In the African traditional society, work is aimed at the provision of the basic needs of life. Fafunwa (1974) asserts that the aim of education in traditional society is character training and job-orientation. The African child is trained from infancy to engage in one meaningful work or the other and this is not only for personal fulfilment but for social and communal responsibility. Kalejaiye (2015) opines that work exerts efforts in order to earn something in return. In Okun tribe, there are names that reflect the importance of work and to also encourage diligence.

Isehunwa	Work is beautiful
Iseniyi	Work has honour
Isenewo	Work has wealth in it
Iseenodi	Work has no enemy
Isenewa	Work has beauty

Money

The importance of money cannot be over emphasized. Money is good and useful to solve many problems. In Okun, there are names that reflect the importance of money. Yakubu (2021) affirms that money is one of the most essential things in human life, being the means by which our needs are met.

Okun names	Meanings
Ewoshagba	Money is superior
Ewotunse	Money repairs things
Ewohunwa	Money is good
Ewoniyi	Money has dignity / honour
Elewomakan	A rich man is conscious of shame
Amoebi(Amewobi)	Born when the family is financially buoyant

Death

Death is an inevitable end that brings sorrows and tears when it occurs, Nabofa (1980) submits that the issue of death is a baffling and disturbing problem. Needless to say that death brings depression, untold sadness, and irritability. In the African context, death is not natural, as it is mostly attributed to witchcraft or household enemies. Health direct (2024) asserts that those left behind often feel sad, empty or lonely and sometimes angry or guilty, the feelings can be painful, constant or overwhelming. Death is a terrible experience that is blind, takes people away and brings sorrow and tears. This reflects in the names that have to do with death in Okun. Nabofa (1980) submits that the issue of death is a baffling and disturbing problem. In okun, there are names that show the unexpected and sad experiences that people have had with death.

Okun names	Meaning
Ikusika	Death has done wicked thing
Ikubaiyeje	Death destroys the world
Ikubolaje	Death destroys wealth
Ikusemoran	Death has dealt with me or has offended me
Ikugbuyi	Death has taken away honour
Ikuenayo	Death has no joy
Ikusemika	Death has been wicked to me
Ikusemibe	Death has made me like this
Ikusemoro	Death has inflicted pain on me
Ikupolati	Death abandons wealth
Ikuerina	Death is blind
Ikuedanijo	Death does not announce its date of arrival
Ikuenogbon	Death is not wise
Ikusenika	Death does wicked things to people
Ikuedenoni	Death does not request for one's relative
Ikubaunje	Death destroys things
Ikusenibe	It is death that has made someone so

Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology to examine the influence of indigenous language on the formation of Okun identity via names. The methodology aims to encompass the cultural, historical, and social aspects of naming practices through interviews, archival research, and anthropological observations. The research employs an ethnographic design, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the relationship among language, identity, and cultural activities. This methodology offers a comprehensive insight into the role of Okun names as indicators of identity, based on participants' live experiences and cultural circumstances.

The research encompassed 35 participants, comprising community elders, linguists, parents, educators, spiritual leaders, and youth from Okun communities. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling to guarantee representation across various age demographics and social roles. Semi-structured interviews were administered in both English and the Okun language, contingent upon participants' preferences. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' agreement and subsequently transcribed for thematic analysis. In instances when comments were articulated in Okun, translations were supplied by cultural experts to ensure precision. Archival resources, comprising historical records, naming registrations, oral histories, and literature pertaining to the Okun language and culture, obtained from local libraries, community archives, and cultural heritage centres in Okunland, were examined. These materials offered insights into the historical development of naming conventions, the linguistic implications of names, and their sociological relevance throughout history.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study obtained from interviews, archival sources, and anthropological observations, elucidate essential insights into the influence of indigenous language on the formation of Okun identity via names. The subsequent discussion addresses findings, highlighting themes such as cultural identity, historical continuity, spiritual value, and the influence of globalisation on naming conventions.

Cultural Identity and Communal Affiliation

Discussions with community leaders and linguists emphasised the fundamental link between the Okun language and cultural identity. Respondents highlighted that Okun names, frequently derived from proverbs, historical occurrences, and familial narratives, include significant connotations that bolster a sense of belonging and communal cohesion. Names like Jeminiwa (just allow me to have good character) and Maseru (I am not dubious) serve not merely as identifiers but embody the values the Okun people place on character.

Ethnographic observations of naming ceremonies corroborated this assertion. The ceremonies are profoundly anchored in language, with the significances of names clearly expressed and commemorated. This collective action reinforces common cultural values and sustains the identity of the Okun people, despite the external cultural influences encountered by newer generations.

Historical Continuity and Heritage Preservation

Archival materials unveiled the historical significance of Okun names, documenting their growth through time. Numerous names signify important events, customary professions, or communal adversities, functioning as a historical chronicle of Okun heritage. Names originating from agricultural or martial backgrounds reflect the resilience and industrious nature of the Okun people. Interviewed elders articulated apprehension that the degradation of indigenous language may result in the obliteration of these historical narratives. They emphasised that the significance of Okun names is frequently unintelligible without proficiency in the language, highlighting the essential function of language in maintaining historical identity.

Spiritual and Philosophical Importance

Interviews with spiritual leaders and cultural practitioners indicated that numerous Okun names include spiritual and philosophical significance, embodying the religious beliefs and worldview of the community. Names such as Olorunmohunle (I rely wholly on God) and Olorunsegun (God has won the battle) are profoundly linked to the individual's faith and their connection with the divine. Ethnographic investigations of religious rites revealed that names are frequently invoked in prayers and blessings, underscoring their sanctity. This discovery highlights the spiritual aspect of naming conventions and the pivotal function of language in articulating these convictions.

Effects of Globalisation on Naming Conventions

The research revealed the increasing impact of globalisation and urbanisation on Okun naming conventions. Younger participants frequently indicated a preference for Western or generic names, citing apprehensions over pronunciation, challenges and social assimilation in non-Okun environments. Archival materials confirmed this tendency, indicating a decrease in the utilisation of indigenous names in recent decades. Discussions with educators and parents underscored a dual challenge: the decline of linguistic competence in the Okun language and a progressive disconnection from its cultural relevance. Nevertheless, certain respondents expressed an increasing recognition of the significance of safeguarding Okun identity, since initiatives to reinstate indigenous naming conventions are gathering momentum.

Revitalisation Initiatives and Community Resilience

The investigation revealed signs of continued efforts to rejuvenate the Okun language and its naming conventions. Community-driven activities; including storytelling events, language lessons, and cultural festivals, significantly contribute to the reintroduction of traditional names and their meanings to younger generations. Participants conveyed optimism that these measures, along with contemporary technologies such as, social media and digital platforms, may reconcile the generational divide and preserve the Okun identity. The findings indicate the Okun people's tenacity in maintaining their traditional legacy amid external pressures.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of indigenous language in forming and maintaining Okun identity, especially regarding naming conventions. Okun names, intricately woven into the indigenous language, serve not just as identifiers but also as cultural vessels, imbued with historical, spiritual, and social value. They embody the values, beliefs, and collective experiences of the Okun people, serving as a conduit across generations and cultivating a sense of belonging and identity. The results indicate that the decline of indigenous language is a substantial risk to the conservation of Okun cultural heritage, since names forfeit their original significances and cultural contexts. The revitalisation and active utilisation of the Okun language in naming conventions can enhance cultural pride, promote unity, and guarantee the preservation of identity amongst globalisation.

This study advocates for deliberate initiatives to conserve and develop the Okun language by education, community involvement, and documentation. By acknowledging the inherent connection between language and identity, such programs would not only preserve Okun history but also motivate other indigenous communities to retain their own cultural manifestations.

Recommendations

The subsequent recommendations are suggested to enhance the significance of indigenous language in

Defining and safeguarding Okun identity through nomenclature:

1. The Okun language ought to be integrated into local educational curricula to guarantee that future generations are instructed in the language, its meanings, and cultural significance, particularly the relevance of names.
2. Community leaders and stakeholders ought to coordinate seminars, festivals, and storytelling sessions centred on the Okun language and its importance in cultural preservation, highlighting the relevance of names as cultural identifiers.
3. Efforts must be undertaken to record Okun names, their significances, and historical origins. This may entail the development of dictionaries, lexicons, and digital repositories to preserve the language for posterity.
4. Parents and guardians ought to be urged to utilise indigenous Okun names for their offspring, emphasising their cultural importance and cultivating pride in Okun identity.
5. Policies and financing must prioritise the preservation of the Okun language, emphasising language-centric cultural endeavours. Non-governmental organisations focused on cultural preservation could facilitate these initiatives through funding and partnerships.

6. Ongoing study into the correlation between language, nomenclature, and identity should be promoted, with results shared to enhance understanding of the significance of indigenous language preservation among the Okun community and beyond.
7. Indigenous languages, such as Okun, ought to be promoted via radio, television, social media, and other digital channels, utilising their extensive reach to captivate younger audiences and maintain interest in the language and naming conventions.

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